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LETTER DATED 9 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward, on behalf of Chief Tom Ikimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and Chairman of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone of the Economic Community of West African States, the text of the final communiqué issued at the end of the eighth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, held in New York on 5 and 6 February 1998 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Isaac E. AYEWAH
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Final communiqué of the eighth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone of the Economic Community of West African States, held in New York on 5 and 6 February 1998

1. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ministerial Committee of Five on Sierra Leone held its eighth meeting in New York on 5 and 6 February 1998.

2. All members of the Committee were present: Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Liberia, Federal Republic of Nigeria, the ECOWAS Executive Secretary and the representative of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

3. Attending as observers were the Republic of Sierra Leone, represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Sierra Leone.

4. The Ministers met with the Secretary-General on 5 February 1998 and briefed him on the latest situation in Sierra Leone. They expressed appreciation for the positive steps being initiated by the Secretary-General in support of ECOWAS initiatives in that country. They also met with the members of the Security Council under the Arria Formula on 6 February 1998 on the same subject. The members of the Security Council expressed their continued support for the steps being taken by the Committee of Five and the ECOWAS subregion on Sierra Leone. They promised their continued support for the ECOWAS peace efforts.

5. The Ministers reviewed the situation in Sierra Leone and expressed concern at the impasse that now existed in the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan. They noted, in particular, the difficulty in the deployment of Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops and the United Nations Observer Mission throughout Sierra Leone, owing to the intransigence of the junta, who have resorted to reopening issues already agreed upon in the ECOWAS Peace Plan.

6. The Ministers emphasized that the ECOWAS Peace Plan remained the best framework for the resolution of the situation in Sierra Leone. They reaffirmed the three options available to ECOWAS in that regard, namely, (a) the pursuit of dialogue; (b) the imposition of sanctions/embargo; and (c) the possible use of force. The Ministers noted that the junta was now in breach of the ECOWAS Peace Plan and therefore called upon them to comply strictly with its provisions.

7. The Ministers noted that ECOMOG was already effectively deployed in certain parts of Sierra Leone, such as Lungi and Hastings airports, the Kossoh barracks and its environs, as well as in the territory of Sierra Leone near the border with Liberia. They suggested that the United Nations Observer Mission should be deployed alongside ECOMOG in the same manner and that the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Freetown should be carried out at the same time as that of the ECOMOG forces.

8. The Ministers emphasized that 22 April 1998 remained the terminal date for the restoration of the legitimate Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. They therefore called upon the Security Council to reaffirm its commitment to that date and to take appropriate steps in support of that objective.

9. The Ministers noted that the ECOMOG Force Commander, in previous discussions with some members of the international community, had presented broad requirements of ECOMOG, the fulfilment of which would enable it to execute its mandate successfully in Sierra Leone. They appealed to the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the members of the international community at large to provide urgently the needed assistance and logistics support to ECOMOG.

10. The Ministers expressed concern that there had been flagrant violations of the sanctions imposed on the junta in Sierra Leone. They noted, specifically, the violations of the arms embargo and travel restrictions on members of the illegal regime and their families. Accordingly, they called on Members States of the United Nations to comply fully with the sanctions and embargo, as well as the travel restrictions imposed on members of the junta and those associated with them. They further appealed to the Security Council to take appropriate measures to ensure full compliance with the sanctions regime.

11. The Ministers noted the emergence of several initiatives on Sierra Leone. While welcoming the initiatives, they observed that, if not properly harmonized, the situation could be exploited by the junta to reopen negotiations on issues already agreed upon. They therefore stressed the need to harmonize those initiatives in line with the ECOWAS Peace Plan so that all actions could be focused on the central objective, which was the restoration of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to office by 22 April 1998.

12. The Ministers noted with concern the plight of refugees, their impact on neighbouring countries and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone. They expressed appreciation to those countries which had rendered assistance to alleviate the impact of refugees in neighbouring countries. They called upon all Member States of the United Nations to give the necessary assistance to the countries in the subregion bearing the brunt of the refugee problem. They also called upon the junta to cooperate with ECOWAS in the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan so that humanitarian corridors could be established to facilitate the delivery of relief materials to the people of Sierra Leone.

13. The Ministers welcomed the initiative to establish a contact group on Sierra Leone. They expressed appreciation for the agreement of the Secretary-General to co-chair, with ECOWAS, the launching of the contact group.

14. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the pledges made by some countries to contribute to a trust fund for Sierra Leone and called on other Member States to make contributions whenever such a fund was established.

15. The Ministers briefed the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council on the efforts made by the Chairman of ECOWAS for troop-contribution by member States of the subregion. They noted, with satisfaction, the favourable responses from States members of ECOWAS and called upon the Security Council and

members of the international community to provide all necessary assistance to ECOWAS to allow timely delivery of the troops to ECOMOG.

16. The Ministers expressed their profound appreciation to the Secretary-General and members of the Security Council for the support the United Nations had consistently given to the ECOWAS peace efforts in the subregion and their readiness to take additional measures in that regard.